



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
KOMNAS PEREMPUAN
KOMISI NASIONAL ANTI KEKERASAN TERHADAP PEREMPUAN

PROCEEDING

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP ON GENDER



“WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRATISATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY ASIA”

27-28 April 2018 | Widya Graha Building LIPI Jakarta, Indonesia

Editor:

Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi, Augustina Situmorang, Widjajanti M. Santoso

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Jakarta, Jum’at-Sabtu 27-28 April 2018
di Auditorium Utama LIPI, Lt.1 - Jakarta

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Pusat Penelitian Politik
Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (P2P-LIPI)

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Design & layout

Prayogo

ISBN : 978-602-5991-04-2
x + 489 page; 21 x 29.7 cm

Cetakan: Kesatu, Oktober 2018

Published by

Center for Political Studies
Indonesian Institute of Sciences – P2P LIPI
Widya Graha LIPI 3rd and 11th Floor
Jl. Jend. Gatot Subroto, Kav. 10 Jakarta Indonesia
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THE EFFECT OF GENDER, CANDIDATE'S ACCOMPLISHMENT AND RELIGIOUS VALUES ON VOTING BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

Women's participation in political contestation remains low. This is inseparable from women's low electability in their capacity in leadership. The reason to elect for a candidate is influenced by such factors as candidate's identity and profile, and the personal value of the voters. This study is intended to explore the effect of gender, the candidate's accomplishment profile and the value of the voters on voting behavior. The present study uses 3 full factorial experiments which involves 105 participants. The result indicates that candidate's accomplishment has a remarkable effect. However, if candidate's accomplishment is disregarded, gender identity and religious values strongly influence on voting behavior.

Keywords: Gender, Voting Behavior, Candidate's Profile, Religious Value

1. Introduction

There has been an interesting development in political psychology, particularly with regard to the role of women in politics. After reformation era, political rights and competence of women have been more and more gaining recognition. Political rights involve the right to elect, run for candidacy, and be declared as a leader. In the 1999 presidential election, Megawati Soekarno Putri, nominated by Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), emerged as the first woman candidate. The appointment of a woman by a political party in the presidential election indicates recognition on women's competence in leadership. In addition to presidential election in national scope, woman candidates appeared in the local leader election and some of them won the election. Issuance of Law No. 2 2008 implicates for a minimum of 30 per cent quota for women in party establishment and leadership.

On the other side, participation of women in political contestation remains low. According to the survey by Pendulum in 2016, only 44 women of 614 candidates (7,17% percent) in the simultaneous local leader elections (PILKADA). Compared to 2015, in which 123 women of 1,646 candidates met requirements for candidacy, the percentage was slightly decline (0,30 percent). Moreover, in the 2015 local leader elections, 46 women won the elections (of 123 candidates 37,39 percent). Thus, it can be said that woman participation in politics is still under represented [1].

Given low participation and victory of women in political competition, a special strategy is required to increase the chances of victory. Direct election, as it happens today, insists the candidate on following the wishes of the voters. An attempt to understand behavior, feelings and thoughts of the voters is not always easy to be made and requires serious efforts of the candidates and the success team to understand the wishes of voters. Based on a study by Remaud & Gillan, voters are concerned by the ability of the candidate instead of the candidate *per se* [2]. Understanding the needs of the voters is essential to formulate a better policy for society. Voting behavior is defined as voters' decision to vote for a particular candidate in both the legislative and executive elections. Electorate behavior studies have been ever-appealing in political psychology.

In political science voting behavior can be analyzed by three different approaches [3]. The first is sociological approach. Sociological analyzes of voting behavior was initially developed by scholars of Columbia University, and thus this approach also often referred to the Columbia school. The primary assumption of this approach is that everyone is bound to various social circles, such as family, workplace, neighborhood, and so forth. Each individual is encouraged to adapt so that his/her behavior can be approved by his/her social environment. This context also applies in electorate behavior. Individual's background, gender, social class, race, religion, and ideology determine the decision.

This approach posits that voting is not merely personal but also communal experience. Individual's voting behavior tends to comply with predisposing social and political surroundings. From various social bounds which exist in the society, scholars of political science typically point out three major factors as the earliest index of this approach e.g. socio-economic, religion, and a place where someone lives.

The second is psychological approach. There are three concepts of psychological approaches which firstly introduced by the political science scholars from the University of Michigan, namely: (1) personal perceptions and judgments of candidates; (2) the perception and the topics raised; and (3) identification of party or partisanship. According to this approach, voter choice is not directly influenced by the social structure, as emphasized by the sociological approach (Columbia School);

rather the short-term and long-term factors of voters. In this approach, values, personal qualities of the candidate, the issues developed by the candidates and loyalty to the party are the dominant factors which influence on voters decision. Issues or topics orientation are a conceptualization of short-term influences introduced by the psychological approach. Specific issues can only influence voter behavior if they meet the three following conditions: (1) the issue has to draw electorate attention; (2) the issue is considered crucial by the voters; (3) voters can classify their position on the issue, either positive or negative.

The third is rational choice model. This model emerges due to the decline in the influence of social class and religion in politics which encourages scholars of voting behavior studies to discover alternative explanation in addition to sociological and in turn to propose economic, personality, issues and the media. This model emphasizes that individuals are independent actors, unattached with a certain party and voter group.

The rational choice model, firstly introduced by Anthony Downs, is strongly influenced by the economic principle of supply and demand. Based on the supply and demand perspective of economic theory, rational voters will only exist if the party they choose will provide maximum personal gain. Like voters, political parties need to maximize their utility, including government revenue, power and prestige. Voters are expected to "buy it". This theory combines social action theories and economic theory of rationality. Downs defines rationality as an attempt to attain goals in the most reasonable way. In the elections, this theory basically emphasizes on the individual's motivation to choose or not and on how to choose based on the calculation of the benefits resulting from the decision. The theory that places individuals as the center of this analysis uses a deductive approach.

From analyzes of these three different approaches, it is interesting to note that voting behavior is not only influenced by sociological factors, but also economic and psychological factors. Therefore, voting behavior is not easily predictable using simple assumptions. Figure of the candidates is a selling commodity in the elections in the sense that approval of the figures can be starting point for victory in the elections, while nominating less approved figures can lead to loss. Aspects of the figures which often become issues in candidate's campaign involve gender and candidate's accomplishment, in addition to sociological issues of religious values.

Systematic comparative studies about the impacts of gender on electorate behavior are at an early stage of scientific development. Several studies indicated that there are different patterns of voting behavior between men and women. Women are more conservative in determining their choice than men [4]. Some references illustrate that voting behavior is influenced by candidate profiles [5]. Men are believed to have more capacity to be a leader than women. On the other hand women's desire to perform on politics has been a concern. Two broad interpretations have appeared in the literature to explain this development: firstly, an increase in the quantity of women who are more likely to be employed in the public sector, and therefore more supportive to political parties that favor work or government growth; and secondly, because affirmations for women to work by providing greater incentives [6]. However, no evidence so far confirms that gender gap is distributed equally across countries.

In addition to gender roles, some factors are actually less relevant to the profile. Furthermore, the religious values held by the voters also strengthen its influence [7]. Discussions about voting and religion have received much attention. Religious differences are sometimes viewed as the most important source of voter diversity [8], and research on religious-based differences has increased significantly in recent years [9]. It is argued that in a secular-developed country the impact of

religion on political preferences will decrease. However, in fact voters in a secular-developed country who maintain their religious identity can oppose other aspects of the secularization process. This study aims to examine the influence of gender, candidate's accomplishment and situation factor, specifically, religious values, in the election.

2. Research Methodology

This study used thought experiment which is a paper-pencil based experiment method [10]. Instead internet media, paper-pencil was chosen as media to give specific situation or scenario as a stimulus for respondents. The experiment included three different scenarios. Each scenario consists of story about a local leader election with two candidates, one male and one female and includes images of a man and a woman. Each of three scenarios has a distinctive feature of experiment manipulation. The first scenario only explains two candidates for election, a man and a woman, without further information. The second scenario, in addition to presentation of candidates' gender, describes that the female candidate has better accomplishment and achievement than the male. The third scenario, besides giving information about better accomplishment of the female candidate, illustrates a campaigner who quotes a verse in *the Qur'an* suggesting preference for male leaders over female.

This study involved 105 participants that divided into three factorial-design groups (each group receives different scenario, and consists of 35 participants). Participants were invited by announcement. All subjects are university student whose age meets criteria to attend the election. The subjects also reported their voting experience both in the legislative election and local leader election. In terms of gender, 63% of the participants are females and 37% are males. Ratio of participants' gender can be ignored because recent studies showed gender of voter had no effect to decision of election. The age ranges between 19-23 years-old. About 83% of participants reported past voting behavior either in the legislative election or local leader elections and 17% reported no previous voting experience. The experiment was conducted in laboratory of Psychology UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

A simple question was asked to collect the data, i.e., "after taking a close look at the above candidates, please vote for the candidate whom you think the most capable to be a leader: A (for the male candidate) and B (for the female candidate)". The choice A or the male candidate was assigned to the numerical code of 1 while choice B or the female was assigned to the numerical code of 2. Manipulation check was performed using an open-ended question about the reason for candidate selection. The data had been analyzed with statistical analysis of descriptions and analysis of variants to determine differences between given scenarios. Analysis using the help of SPSS program version 22.0.

3. Research Highlight

This study shows influence of candidate figure on the tendency to be selected. In situations without adequate information, men tend to be selected than women. However, when given information about candidate achievement, there is influence of candidate's achievement on tendency of voting behavior. In addition, provision of religious issues does not affect the tendency to vote.

The first condition or scenario, containing the nomination of the male and the female as a local leader candidate, showed that all subjects (100%) vote for the male candidate. In contrast,

in second scenario with the description of a better accomplishment of female candidate, results indicated that most subjects preferred the female candidate (59%) over the male (49%).

Third scenario presented a paradoxical phenomenon. This scenario depicted that the female has a better accomplishment, but on the other hand the participant is presented with a verse of the *Qur'an* which suggests choosing the male. The result showed that the subjects continued to choose the female (63%) over the male candidate (37%).

The results of the statistical analyzes indicated a significant difference in the preference for candidate selection among scenarios ($F = 23,979$; $p < 0,01$). Mean of each scenario showed that in the case of presentation of candidate's accomplishment, the voters prefer the female candidate over the male.

Table 1 shows comparison between group 1 and group 2 (groups given only scenarios that tell gender of candidates with groups given scenarios that inform woman candidate's achievements). The results show that there is a significant difference ($t = -0,586$ $p < 0,001$) among the two groups. This suggests that provision of information will make voters tend to choose individuals who excel, in this case women, and ignore the issue of male superiority.

In comparison between group 2 and group 3 (group with scenario that presents more women candidate's achievement and group with scenario Quranic verses suggesting preference for male leaders over female) shows no difference in choosing candidates ($t = -,038$, $p > 0,05$). This means that tendency of choosing an achieving woman can not be influenced by giving Quran verses that advocate choosing male candidates.

In the comparison between all scenarios: groups 1, groups 2 and group 3 (groups with lack informed scenarios; groups with scenarios of women candidate's achievement; group with scenario provision of Quranic verses) shows differences in tendency to vote for candidates ($t = -0,625$; $p < 0,01$). It tells that participants more likely to choose women candidate if she has achievements.

Those results draw a conclusion, accomplishment of the candidate was shown to be more and more influential factor in attracting voters' attention to vote for the candidate. A suggestion of male's superiority for a leader from the verse of the *Qur'an* cannot override candidate's accomplishment as the most determining factor in the local leader election. Looking at results of this study, majority of the subjects tend to prefer individual who have a better achievement. Indeed citing the verse of the *Qur'an* suggesting choosing male candidate is not able to alter preference of the participants.

Table 1. Comparison vote for candidate between scenarios of the local leader election

| | Scenario | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|--------|--------|
| 1 | Without information | - | -,586* | -,625* |
| 2 | Better accomplishment of the female candidate | - | | -,038 |
| 3 | Better accomplishment of the female with quoting a verse of the <i>Qur'an</i> suggesting male's superiority for a leader over females | - | | |

* The differences are significant at $p < 0,05$.

Manipulation checking showed that the subject understand the scenario which was presented. The first scenario presents only information about gender of the candidates, i.e., a male and a female. In general the subjects prefer the male because they believe that males have better capability than females in leadership both physically and psychologically. For instance, some subjects who vote for the male argued the followings:

"because males are a good leader who can lead well with logic and are wiser, while women use more affection"

On the other hand, some votes for the male for the reason of religious values:

"because according to the Islamic law, it is prohibited to vote for females as an Imam (leader), in case of an outstanding woman in a leadership, she can be a deputy at best in order to support her leader"

While the second scenario presents that the female candidate performs better than the male, subjects who choose women as leaders believe that the female's accomplishment is regarded as a good model to develop their region.

"I vote for candidate B (the female) because she has broader and more experience and thus I feel she can govern very well".

Nevertheless, those who choose the male for a reason of religion are interested to vote for the male and tend to ignore candidate's accomplishment.

"Islam has assigned males to lead and their basic ability is good".

"Accomplishment is not really a matter in running for a leader position"

As for scenario 3, candidate's gender and accomplishment were combined with the verse of the *Qur'an*, showing that the subjects still prefer accomplishments over gender or the verse quoted in the campaign for the subjects who choose the female. Meanwhile, those who choose the male tend to say that the verse quoted can be legitimation to vote for the male candidate.

The reason for vote varies. Those who vote for the female believes that accomplishment can be a reference although they realize the presence of verse of the *Qur'an*, such as:

"Although the verse above has been quoted, if the candidate has no capability to lead regardless gender, the one who has a good potential should deserve the position, because a leader has a great responsibility".

Those who choose the male use the verse of the *Qur'an* as justification for their choice, as the following opinions expressed by a participant:

"The verse above can be a powerful justification but even more powerful if the male can proof their superiority into action as a response to the verse"

4. Research Resultn

The results showed that in case of minimal information presented, with only gender, voters will take the basic values adopted into consideration. Then the voters will use the minimal data to make their choice. This is confirmed in this study in which all participants vote for the male candidate. The subjects choose men as a leader due to gender stereotypes of the voters that males

have better emotional regulation than females. Stereotypes can be categorized into three aspects: the amount of available information to the person, the prominence of one's group membership, and the power balance [11]. Stereotypes emerges in this study may be resulted by the amount of information provided to the voters as the voters were only presented with images of a man and a woman. Unavailability of information will produce in the individual's heuristic thinking [12]. This thinking process is performed by individuals since this process does not to require a complex mental process. Heuristic approach occurs due to lack of motivation to think critically and explore more information in addition to the lack of information [13]. In these conditions voters will match the scheme of ideal leaders they have with gender roles that exist in men and women. Assumption that male are more masculine while female are feminine yields in different attitudes in predictions of a future leadership success in managing a local government.

Initially voters chose based on the gender role scheme. The influence of gender and beliefs on voting candidates can be explained by concept of gender role. Men in traditional culture tend to be considered to have the character to lead such as, dominant, independent and fast in making decisions. Instead women are considered weak in leadership with depicted with characters such as obedient, whiny, and less resolute decision-making. Although the role of gender is shaped by social construction, in other words can be changed, but belief in this scheme affects individuals or voters in determining their choice[14].

However, when it comes to the second scenario of the experiment presenting candidate's accomplishment, it was found that voters tend to choose candidates based on their accomplishment, even if the candidate is a female. Merit-based consideration is the main feature of rational voters. As Kusmayadi points out, according to the rational voter model, it is assumed that voters have a rational capacity to make decision [15] [3]. Voters are deemed to understand the reasons for voting, the impact of their choice and they are aware that their voice is an important instrument for the articulation of their political interests.

For the rational voters, the candidate's profile, more specifically candidate's accomplishment, can greatly determine electability. The candidate's profiles strongly influence voter's attitude to make decision. A credible candidate will receive a positive evaluation. Credibility of the candidate consists of two characteristics, namely competence and degree of trust. Competence is related to the knowledge, intellectual ability, accomplishment and ability to deliver the role of the candidate. Meanwhile, the degree of trust refers to the extent to which a candidate can be trusted to be relied upon.

As for the third scenario, the experiment was conducted through eliciting religious values and presentation of candidate's accomplishment and it is shown that gender has no direct influence on voter's decision. These results are in line with a study by Johns & Shepard which showed that it is gender evaluation and traits of the candidate which significantly influence on voter's decision in the election, not a gender stereotype on candidate [16].

In addition to candidate's accomplishment, religious values held by the voters also influence decision to vote for a candidate. Although the results of the third scenario showed similarity in terms of votes acquired with the second scenario, there are different views. Different perspectives on the candidate selection between the male and the female candidate are based on differences in the interpretation of the verse explicitly or implicitly. This result is contradictory with a study conducted by Sofianto which found that religious values serve as a reason in participation indicated from 8% of respondents stating strongly agree and 41.4% stating agree with the reason that religion is the foundation to categorize a good or bad candidate [7].

On the other hand, candidate's accomplishment can convince voters for the future success and it influences on voters' decision for the female candidate. According to Mayer accomplishment is an attribute that gives the reason for the voters' trust. Additionally, there are other components that support the trust namely ability, virtue, and integrity [17]. Beliefs based on candidate's accomplishment can reduce gender stereotypes and the majority of voters choose the female candidate based on her accomplishment. Furthermore, belief in the candidate's accomplishment can assure voters for the leadership success in future. It can be argued that candidate's accomplishment have a greater influence on the voting decision than gender and religious values.

The result does not show a strong influence in religious values in election. It can be understood because this study uses novice voters as subjects. Beginner voters tend to be rational in making choices. Religion in politics tends to function as a social identity. While rational voters will act pragmatically oriented figures compared with social identity.

Emotional relationship which involves voter's trust on the candidate can also build a positive relationship so that the voter believes in the leadership of the candidate. Such trust can also arise from the party that declares the candidate because it can be predicted form electability of the party. Establishment of emotional relationships between voters and the candidate can be analogous to the religious belief which ranges from the low religious level to become deeper and deeper belief [18].

Though it is not strongly influence voters' decision, especially of rational voters, religious value and belief are frequently used in campaigns to improve electability of a candidate. This is the reason why a politician raises such religious issues in his/her campaign to win the election. Jasiewicz finds that religion is still an important issue in politics, in both religious and secular societies [19].

In Indonesia, religious communities are potential targets for religious issues which are usually raised to attack opposing candidates, particularly the issues of Moslem vs non-Moslem and women's leaders. People are compulsive and thus easily are influenced by political mainstream. Therefore, during the general election or the local leader elections, many issues emerge even though they may disappear shortly upon completion of the election.

Religious issues are often used in a campaign and frequently take a form of negative campaign to attack opposing candidates. General Election Committee (KPU) and the ministry of Information have passed a campaign regulation to prevent the impacts of issues which was raised in negative campaign.

This study implies that political education is on demand. Socialization and learning efforts for the voters, especially for the beginner voters, have to be conducted with emphasize on rational aspect for voting decision. Efforts in political education ought to prepare voters to deal with differences with others' choice.

5. Conclusio

Candidate's accomplishment has a more significant impact on voting behavior than gender and religious values. This can be attributed to the voters' assumption that accomplishment can guarantee leadership success. As such, accomplishment which was attained can convince voters to vote for an outstanding candidate. It also can override gender stereotype which is salient in society that women are less competent than men in leadership. In addition, although voters are encountered with situation which can provoke religious values, number of voters who choose the

female candidate is the same as in the case of the absence of situation which elicit religious values and thus it can be concluded that trust on accomplishment which is attached to the candidate influence on voting behavior despite variation in the reason which underlies candidate selection.

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